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APPLICATION NO.	FILING DATE	FIRST NAMED INVENTOR	ATTORNEY DOCKET NO.	CONFIRMATION NO.
10/037,236	11/09/2001	James F. Zucherman	5910-162	6669
65901 7590 07/24/2008 COATS & BENNETT/MEDTRONIC 1400 CRESCENT GREEN SUITE 300 CARY, NC 27518				
EXAMINER				
COMSTOCK, DAVID C				
ART UNIT		PAPER NUMBER		
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MAIL DATE		DELIVERY MODE		
07/24/2008		PAPER		

Please find below and/or attached an Office communication concerning this application or proceeding.

The time period for reply, if any, is set in the attached communication.

Office Action Summary

Application No.

10/037,236

Applicant(s)

ZUCHERMAN ET AL.

Examiner

DAVID COMSTOCK

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-- The MAILING DATE of this communication appears on the cover sheet with the correspondence address --
Period for Reply

A SHORTENED STATUTORY PERIOD FOR REPLY IS SET TO EXPIRE 3 MONTH(S) OR THIRTY (30) DAYS, WHICHEVER IS LONGER, FROM THE MAILING DATE OF THIS COMMUNICATION.

- Extensions of time may be available under the provisions of 37 CFR 1.136(a). In no event, however, may a reply be timely filed after SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- If NO period for reply is specified above, the maximum statutory period will apply and will expire SIX (6) MONTHS from the mailing date of this communication.
- Failure to reply within the set or extended period for reply will, by statute, cause the application to become ABANDONED (35 U.S.C. § 133). Any reply received by the Office later than three months after the mailing date of this communication, even if timely filed, may reduce any earned patent term adjustment. See 37 CFR 1.704(b).

Status

- 1) ☒ Responsive to communication(s) filed on 4/24/08.
- 2a) ☒ This action is **FINAL**. 2b) ☐ This action is non-final.
- 3) ☐ Since this application is in condition for allowance except for formal matters, prosecution as to the merits is closed in accordance with the practice under *Ex parte Quayle*, 1935 C.D. 11, 453 O.G. 213.

Disposition of Claims

- 4) ☒ Claim(s) 60-67,97,106,108-110,112,113 and 119-137 is/are pending in the application.
- 4a) Of the above claim(s) _____ is/are withdrawn from consideration.
- 5) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are allowed.
- 6) ☒ Claim(s) 60-67,97,106,108-110,112,113 and 119-137 is/are rejected.
- 7) ☐ Claim(s) _____ is/are objected to.
- 8) ☐ Claim(s) _____ are subject to restriction and/or election requirement.

Application Papers

- 9) ☐ The specification is objected to by the Examiner.
- 10) ☒ The drawing(s) filed on 26 March 2002 is/are: a) ☒ accepted or b) ☐ objected to by the Examiner.
- Applicant may not request that any objection to the drawing(s) be held in abeyance. See 37 CFR 1.85(a).
- Replacement drawing sheet(s) including the correction is required if the drawing(s) is objected to. See 37 CFR 1.121(d).
- 11) ☐ The oath or declaration is objected to by the Examiner. Note the attached Office Action or form PTO-152.

Priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119

- 12) ☐ Acknowledgment is made of a claim for foreign priority under 35 U.S.C. § 119(a)-(d) or (f).
- a) ☐ All b) ☐ Some * c) ☐ None of:
1. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received.
 2. ☐ Certified copies of the priority documents have been received in Application No. _____.
 3. ☐ Copies of the certified copies of the priority documents have been received in this National Stage application from the International Bureau (PCT Rule 17.2(a)).

* See the attached detailed Office action for a list of the certified copies not received.

Attachment(s)

- 1) ☐ Notice of References Cited (PTO-892)
- 2) ☐ Notice of Draftperson's Patent Drawing Review (PTO-948)
- 3) ☐ Information Disclosure Statement(s) (PTO/SB/08)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 4) ☐ Interview Summary (PTO-413)
Paper No(s)/Mail Date _____
- 5) ☐ Notice of Informal Patent Application
- 6) ☐ Other: _____

DETAILED ACTION

Claim Rejections - 35 USC § 103

The following is a quotation of 35 U.S.C. 103(a) which forms the basis for all obviousness rejections set forth in this Office action:

(a) A patent may not be obtained though the invention is not identically disclosed or described as set forth in section 102 of this title, if the differences between the subject matter sought to be patented and the prior art are such that the subject matter as a whole would have been obvious at the time the invention was made to a person having ordinary skill in the art to which said subject matter pertains. Patentability shall not be negated by the manner in which the invention was made.

The factual inquiries set forth in *Graham v. John Deere Co.*, 383 U.S. 1, 148 USPQ 459 (1966), that are applied for establishing a background for determining obviousness under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) are summarized as follows:

1. Determining the scope and contents of the prior art.
2. Ascertaining the differences between the prior art and the claims at issue.
3. Resolving the level of ordinary skill in the pertinent art.
4. Considering objective evidence present in the application indicating obviousness or nonobviousness.

This application currently names joint inventors. In considering patentability of the claims under 35 U.S.C. 103(a), the examiner presumes that the subject matter of the various claims was commonly owned at the time any inventions covered therein were made absent any evidence to the contrary. Applicant is advised of the obligation under 37 CFR 1.56 to point out the inventor and invention dates of each claim that was not commonly owned at the time a later invention was made in order for the examiner to consider the applicability of 35 U.S.C. 103(c) and potential 35 U.S.C. 102(e), (f) or (g) prior art under 35 U.S.C. 103(a).

Claims 60-67, 97, 106, 108-110, 112, 113 and 119-137 are rejected under 35 U.S.C. 103(a) as being unpatentable over Voydeville Gilles (FR 2724554) (hereafter "Voydeville") in view of Bryan et al. (US 5,674,296).

Figs. 1-4 of Voydeville show an implant for placing between spinous processes, the implant having all the limitations as recited in the above listed claims, including: a "body" comprising the combination of elements 5 and 6; a "shaft" 2; a compressible cylindrical spacer 1 rotatably mounted on the "shaft" 2; a first "wing" 3; and a second "wing" 4. Endcaps (e.g., 7, 8 and/or the hexagonal head) are disposed generally transverse to a longitudinal axis of the body and extend in a direction that is radial with respect to the shaft (see, e.g., Fig. 3). The endcaps are integrally assembled with the device, including the shaft. The spacer is constrained longitudinally and the endcaps are essential to the proper functioning of the device; therefore, the endcaps serve a function to assist in constraining the spacer. Likewise, the flanges assist in the operation of the device, which comprises the constraint of the spacer. A side of an endcap is convex and generally faces toward the spacer. Space between the opposing portions of the shaft constitute a central opening or bore. Voydeville shows a device that is basically the same as that recited in the above listed claims. However, Voydeville does not show the spacer having alternative shapes of elliptical, oval, and egg-shaped. Further, although Voydeville discloses that the spacer 1 is made of a "semi-rigid" material, the reference is silent as to the specific material of construction. Bryan et al. also teach an implant or spacer device 20 for placement between vertebrae and disclose that the spacer materials may comprise a varying durometer or "graduated

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stiffness" (see, e.g., Fig. 3; col. 3, line 58 - col. 4, line 5; abstract, and claim 1).

Inasmuch as devices comprising graduated stiffness were known in the art and their use would yield a predictable result of providing varying degrees of flexibility to address different anatomical forces, it would have been obvious to one having ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to substitute a spacer comprising a uniform material for a spacer comprising graduated stiffness, in view of Bryan et al, in order to provide varying degrees of flexibility to address different anatomical forces. In any event, it also would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art at the time the invention was made to construct the spacer to have any anatomically compatible cross-sectional shape, including elliptical, oval, and egg-shaped as claimed, and further to select any biocompatible, semi-rigid material, as a suitable material of construction, including silicone, high molecular weight polymer, thermoplastic elastomer, polycarbonate urethane, or a material having a graduated stiffness, as claimed. It has been held to be within the general skill of a worker in the art to select a known material on the basis of its suitability for the intended use as a matter of obvious design choice. *In re Leshin*, 125 USPQ 416.

Response to Arguments

Applicant's arguments filed 21 January 2008 have been fully considered but they are not persuasive.

In response to Applicant's amended claims, please see the rejection above. Specifically, note that the device of Voydeville shows structure that corresponds to the claim language.

Conclusion

Applicant's amendment necessitated the new ground(s) of rejection presented in this Office action. Accordingly, **THIS ACTION IS MADE FINAL**. See MPEP § 706.07(a). Applicant is reminded of the extension of time policy as set forth in 37 CFR 1.136(a).

A shortened statutory period for reply to this final action is set to expire THREE MONTHS from the mailing date of this action. In the event a first reply is filed within TWO MONTHS of the mailing date of this final action and the advisory action is not mailed until after the end of the THREE-MONTH shortened statutory period, then the shortened statutory period will expire on the date the advisory action is mailed, and any extension fee pursuant to 37 CFR 1.136(a) will be calculated from the mailing date of the advisory action. In no event, however, will the statutory period for reply expire later than SIX MONTHS from the date of this final action.

Any inquiry concerning this communication or earlier communications from the examiner should be directed to David Comstock whose telephone number is (571) 272-4710. Please leave a detailed voice message if examiner is unavailable. If attempts to reach the examiner by telephone are unsuccessful, the examiner's supervisor, Eduardo Robert can be reached at (571) 272-4719. The fax phone number for the organization where this application or proceeding is assigned is 571-273-8300.

Information regarding the status of an application may be obtained from the Patent Application Information Retrieval (PAIR) system. Status information for published applications may be obtained from either Private PAIR or Public PAIR.

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Status information for unpublished applications is available through Private PAIR only.

For more information about the PAIR system, see <http://pair-direct.uspto.gov>. Should you have questions on access to the Private PAIR system, contact the Electronic Business Center (EBC) at 866-217-9197 (toll-free).

/David Comstock/
Examiner, Art Unit 3733

/Eduardo C. Robert/
Supervisory Patent Examiner, Art Unit 3733